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Relocation of Japanese Americans, May 1943

War Relocation Authority

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RELOCATION
of
JAPANESE-AMERICANS



WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY

Washington, D. C.

MAY 1943



RELOCATION *of* JAPANESE-AMERICANS

Background

During the spring and summer of 1942, the United States Government carried out, in remarkably short time and without serious incident, one of the largest controlled migrations in history. This was the movement of 110,000 people of Japanese descent from their homes in an area bordering the Pacific coast into 10 wartime communities constructed in remote areas between the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the Mississippi River.

The evacuation of these people was started in the early spring of 1942. At that time, with invasion of the west coast looming as an imminent possibility, the Western Defense Command of the United States Army decided that the military situation required the removal of all persons of Japanese ancestry from a broad coastal strip. In the weeks that followed, both American-born and alien Japanese residents were moved from a prescribed zone comprising the entire State of California, the western half of Oregon and Washington, and the southern third of Arizona.

The Relocation Program

The United States Government, having called upon these people to move from their homes, also assumed a responsibility for helping them to become reestablished. To carry out this responsibility, the President on March 18, 1942, created a civilian agency known as the War Relocation Authority.

The job of this agency, briefly, is to assist in the relocation of any persons who may be required by the Army to move from their homes in the interest of military security. So far, the work of WRA has been concerned almost exclusively with people of Japanese descent who formerly lived close to the Pacific rim of the country.

At first, plans were made by the Western Defense Command and the WRA to build accommodations only for a portion of the 110,000 evacuated people. A considerable percentage of them, it was hoped, would move out of the restricted area and resettle inland on their own initiative. During March of 1942, some 8,000 actually did move, but the great majority were held back by limited resources, general uncertainty, and mounting signs of community hostility in the intermountain region. By



An American family of Japanese descent.

the latter part of March, it had become apparent that such a large-scale exodus could be handled effectively only on a planned and systematic basis. Accordingly, all further voluntary evacuation was halted by the Western Defense Command on March 29 and plans were initiated by WRA for establishing relocation centers with sufficient capacity and facilities to handle the entire evacuated population for as long as might be necessary.

The relocation centers, however, are NOT and never were intended to be internment camps or places of confinement. They were established for two primary purposes: (1) To provide communities where evacuees might live and contribute, through work, to their own support pending their gradual reabsorption into private employment and normal American life; and (2) to serve as wartime homes for those evacuees who might be unable or unfit to relocate in ordinary American communities. Under regulations adopted in September of 1942, the War Relocation Authority is now working toward a steady depopulation of the centers by encouraging all able-bodied residents with good records of behavior to reenter private employment in agriculture or industry.

The procedures are relatively simple. At a number of key cities throughout the interior of the country, the WRA has field employees known as relocation officers and relocation supervisors. These men, working in close collaboration with local volunteer committees of interested citizens and with the United States Employment Service, seek out

employment opportunities for evacuees in their respective areas and channel such information to the relocation centers where an effort is made to match up the jobs with the most likely evacuee candidates. Direct negotiations are then started between the employer and the potential employee and final arrangements are made ordinarily by mail.

Before any evacuee is permitted to leave a relocation center for the purpose of taking a job or establishing normal residence, however, certain requirements must be met:

1. A careful check is made of the evacuee's behavior record at the relocation center and of other information in the hands of WRA. In all questionable cases, any information in the possession of the federal investigative agencies is requested and studied. If there is any evidence from any source that the evacuee might endanger the security of the Nation, permission for indefinite leave is denied.

2. There must be reasonable assurance from responsible officials or citizens regarding local sentiment in the community where the evacuee plans to settle. If community sentiment appears so hostile to all persons of Japanese descent that the presence of the evacuee seems likely to cause trouble, the evacuee is so advised and is discouraged from relocating in that particular area.

3. Indefinite leave is granted only to evacuees who have a definite place to go and some means of support.

4. Each evacuee going out on indefinite leave must agree to keep WRA informed of any change of job or change of address.

The primary purpose of this program is to restore as many of the evacuees as possible to productive life in normal American communities.

Housing for the residents of relocation centers is provided in simple barracks of frame construction.





Improvements in family living quarters are made by the evacuees themselves from scrap materials.

The specific procedures being followed have been approved by the Department of Justice as sound from the standpoint of national security and have been endorsed by the War Manpower Commission as a contribution to national manpower needs. As the program moves forward, the costs for maintenance of the relocation centers will be steadily reduced.

Persons interested in employing evacuees from relocation centers for any sort of work should communicate with the nearest relocation supervisor of the WRA. The addresses and names of these supervisors are:

City	Street address	Relocation supervisor
Chicago, Ill.	226 West Jackson Blvd.	Elmer L. Shirrell.
Cleveland, Ohio.	Union Commerce Bldg.	Harold Fistere.
Denver, Colo.	Midland Savings Bldg.	Harold Choate.
Salt Lake City, Utah.	318 Atlas Bldg.	H. Rex Lee.
Kansas City, Mo.	1509 Fidelity Bldg.	Vernon Kennedy.
Little Rock, Ark.	Pyramid Bldg.	E. B. Whitaker.
New York, N. Y.	Room 1410, 50 Broadway. .	Robert M. Cullum.

The Evacuated People

In the interest of both accuracy and fairness, it is important to distinguish sharply between the residents of relocation centers and the militarists of Imperial Japan. Two-thirds of the people in the centers are American citizens, born in this country and educated, for the most part, in American public schools. At all centers, the residents have bought thousands of dollars worth of war bonds and have made significant contributions to the American Red Cross. Many of them have sons, husbands, and brothers in the United States Army. Even the aliens among them have nearly all lived in the United States for two decades or longer. And it is important to remember that these particular aliens have been denied the privilege of gaining American citizenship under our laws.

It is also important to distinguish between the residents of relocation centers and civilian internees. Under our laws, aliens of enemy nationality who are found guilty of acts or intentions against the security of the Nation are being confined in internment camps which are administered not by the War Relocation Authority but by the Department of Justice. American citizens suspected of subversive activities are being handled through the ordinary courts. The residents of the relocation centers, however, have never been found guilty—either individually or collectively—of any such acts or intentions. They are merely a group of American residents who happen to have Japanese ancestors and who happened to be living in a potential combat zone shortly after the outbreak

Meals are served cafeteria style at an average food cost of not more than 45 cents per person per day.





Work is available for able-bodied residents on the community farms and in many other lines of activity.

of war. All evidence available to the War Relocation Authority indicates that the great majority of them are completely loyal to the United States.

The Relocation Centers

The physical standards of life in the relocation centers have never been much above the bare subsistence level. For some few of the evacuees, these standards perhaps represent a slight improvement over those enjoyed before evacuation. But for the great majority of the evacuated people, the environment of the centers—despite all efforts to make them livable—remains subnormal and probably always will. In spite of the leave privileges, the movement of evacuees while they reside at the centers is necessarily somewhat restricted and a certain feeling of isolation and confinement is almost inevitable.

Housing is provided for the evacuee residents of the centers in tarpaper-covered barracks of simple frame construction without plumbing or cooking facilities of any kind. Most of these barracks are partitioned off so that a family of five or six, for example, will normally occupy a single room 25 by 20 feet. Bachelors and other unattached evacuees live mainly in unpartitioned barracks which have been established as dormitories. The only furnishings provided by the Government in the residence bar-

racks are standard Army cots and blankets and small heating stoves. One bath, laundry, and toilet building is available for each block of barracks and is shared by upwards of 250 people.

Food is furnished by the Government for all evacuee residents. The meals are planned at an average cost of not more than 45 cents per person per day (the actual cost, as this is written, has averaged about 40 cents), are prepared by evacuee cooks, and are served generally cafeteria style in mess halls that accommodate between 250 and 300 persons. At all centers, Government-owned or Government-leased farmlands are being operated by evacuee agricultural crews to produce a considerable share of the vegetables needed in the mess halls. At nearly all centers, the farm program also includes production of poultry, eggs, and pork; and at a few, the evacuees are raising beef and dairy products. Every evacuee is subject to the same food rationing restrictions as all other residents of the United States.

Medical care is available to all evacuee residents of relocation centers without charge. Hospitals have been built at all the centers and are manned in large part by doctors, nurses, nurses' aides, and technicians from the evacuee population. Simple dental and optical services are also provided and special care is given to infants and nursing mothers. Evacuees requesting special medical services not available at the centers are required to pay for the cost of such services. At all centers, in view of the crowded and abnormal living conditions, special sanitary precautions are necessary to safeguard the community health and prevent the outbreak of epidemics.

Education through the high school level is provided for all evacuee children at relocation centers.





Religion is practiced at relocation centers with the same freedom that prevails throughout the United States.

Work opportunities of many kinds are made available to able-bodied evacuee residents at the relocation centers. The policy of WRA is to make the fullest possible use of evacuee skills and manpower in all jobs that are essential to community operations. Evacuees are employed in the mess halls, on the farms, in the hospitals, on the internal police force, in construction and road maintenance work, in clerical and stenographic jobs, and in many other lines of activity. Most of those who work are paid at the rate of \$16 a month for a 44-hour week. Apprentices and others requiring close supervision receive \$12 while those with professional skills, supervisory responsibilities, or unusually difficult duties are paid \$19. In addition, each evacuee working at a relocation center receives a small monthly allowance for the purchase of work clothing for himself and personal clothing for his dependents. Opportunities for economic gain in the ordinary sense are almost completely lacking to the residents of the centers.

Education through the high-school level is provided by WRA for all school-age residents of the relocation centers. High schools are being built at most of the centers, but grade-school classes will continue to be held in barrack buildings which have been converted for classroom use. Courses of study have been planned and teachers have been selected in

close collaboration with State departments of education and in conformity with prevailing State standards. Roughly one-half of the teachers in the schools have been recruited from the evacuee population. Japanese language schools of the type common on the west coast prior to evacuation are expressly forbidden at all relocation centers.

Vocational training is provided at relocation centers as a part of the regular school program for youngsters and in connection with the employment program for adults. The purpose of this training is twofold: (1) To equip the evacuee residents so that they will be able to play a more productive role in agriculture or industry outside the centers and (2) to provide potential replacements at the centers for those who go out on indefinite leave.

Internal security at each relocation center is maintained by a special police force composed largely of able-bodied evacuee residents and headed by a nonevacuee chief plus a few nonevacuee assistants. Misdemeanors and other similar offenses are ordinarily handled within the center either by the Project Director or by a judicial commission made up of evacuee residents. The maximum penalty for such offenses is imprisonment or suspension of work and compensation privileges for a period of 3 months. Major criminal cases are turned over to the outside courts having appropriate jurisdiction. At each center, the exterior boundaries are guarded by a company of military police who may be called into the center in cases of emergency. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is also called in from time to time as the need arises.

Consumer enterprises, such as stores, canteens, barber shops, and shoe-repair establishments, are maintained at the relocation centers in order that the residents may purchase goods and services which are not provided as part of the regular subsistence. These enterprises are all self-supporting and are managed by the evacuee residents mainly on a consumer cooperative basis. Each resident is eligible for membership in the relocation center cooperative association and all members are entitled to patronage dividends which are derived from the profits and based on the individual volume of purchases. As rapidly as possible, the cooperative associations are being incorporated under appropriate laws.

Evacuee government is practiced in one form or another at every relocation center. In some of the centers, formal charters have been drawn up and evacuee governments roughly paralleling those found in ordinary cities of similar size have been established. In others, evacuee participation in community government has been along more informal lines and has consisted largely of conferences held by small groups of key residents with the Project Director whenever important decisions affecting the population must be reached. The evacuee governmental set-up is not in any sense a substitute for the administration provided by the WRA Project Director and his staff, but residents are encouraged to assume responsibility for many phases of community management.

Religion is practiced at relocation centers with the same freedom that prevails throughout the United States. Nearly half of the evacuees are Christian church members. No church buildings have been provided by the Government but ordinary barracks are used for services by Protestants, Catholics, and Buddhists alike. Ministers and priests from the evacuee population are free to carry on their religious activities at the centers and may also hold other jobs in connection with the center administration. Such workers, however, are not paid by WRA for the performance of their religious duties.

Leisure-time activities at the centers are planned and organized largely by the evacuee residents. The WRA merely furnishes advice and guidance and makes certain areas and buildings available for recreational purposes. At each center, recreational activities of one sort or another have been organized for all groups of residents from the smallest children to the oldest men and women. Local branches of national organizations such as the Red Cross, the YMCA, the YWCA, and the Boy Scouts are definitely encouraged. At some of the centers, athletic contests are arranged periodically with teams from nearby towns.

Student Relocation

Although the War Relocation Authority is placing first emphasis on relocation of evacuees in private employment, student evacuees are also being permitted to leave the centers for the purpose of beginning or continuing a higher education. Applicants for student leave must meet the same requirements as all other applicants for indefinite leave and are permitted to enroll only at institutions where no objection to the attendance of evacuee students has been raised by either the War or Navy Department. The WRA provides no financial assistance to evacuees going out on student leave.

Conservation of Evacuee Property

When 110,000 people of Japanese descent were evacuated from the Pacific coast military area during the spring and summer of 1942, they left behind in their former locations an estimated total of approximately \$200,000,000 worth of real, commercial, and personal property. These properties range from simple household appliances to extensive commercial and agricultural holdings.

At the time of evacuation, many of the evacuees disposed of their properties, especially their household goods, in quick sales that frequently involved heavy financial losses. The majority, however, placed their household furnishings in storage and retained their interest in other holdings even after they were personally transferred to relocation centers. Since these people are now in the position of absentee owners and since many of their properties are highly valuable in the war production effort, the War Relocation Authority is actively assisting them to keep their

commercial and agricultural properties in productive use through lease or sale and is helping them in connection with a wide variety of other property problems.

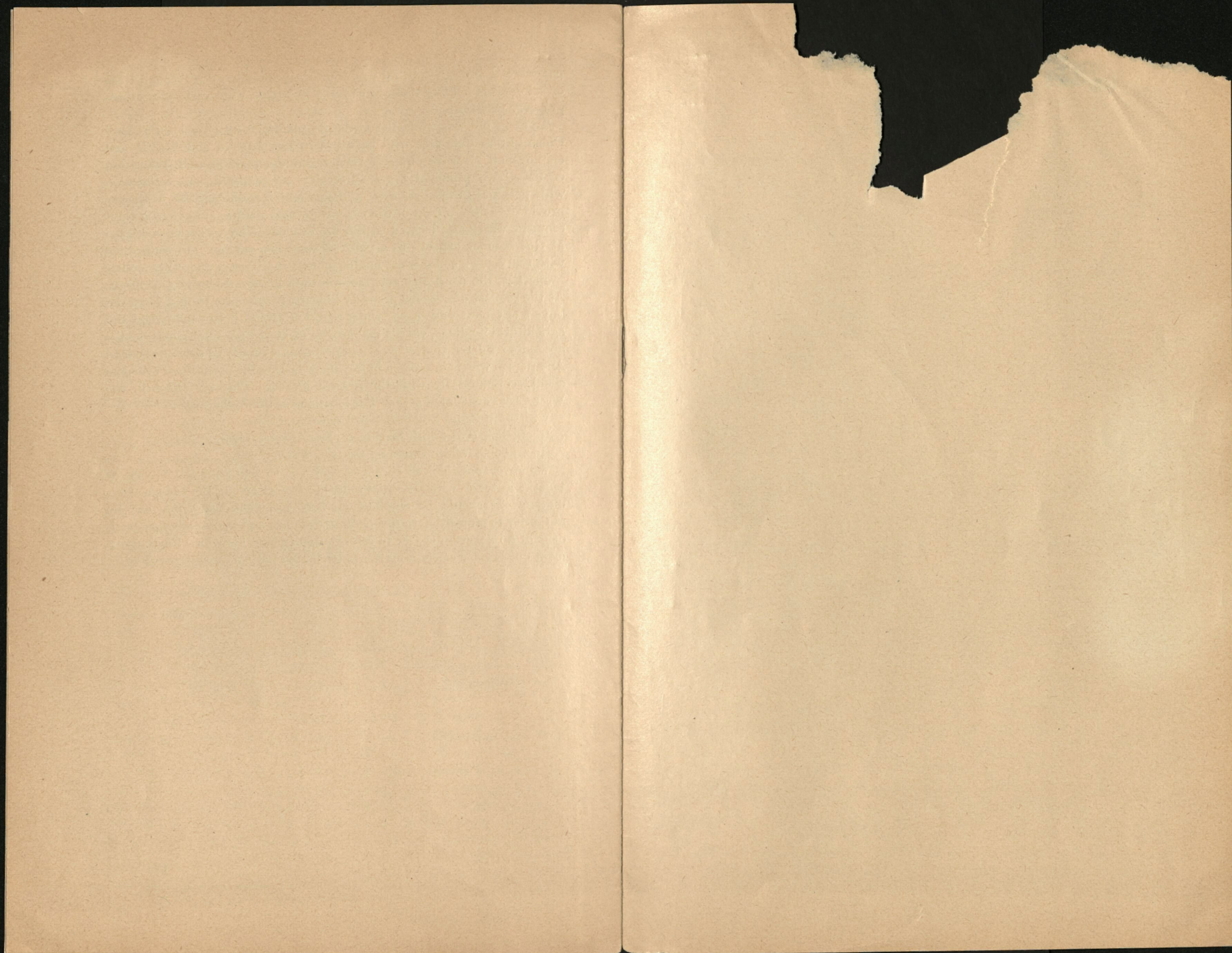
To carry out this work, the Authority maintains an Evacuee Property Office in San Francisco with branches in Los Angeles and Seattle and employs an Evacuee Property Officer on the staff at each relocation center. Two principal types of service are rendered. In connection with personal properties, such as household furnishings, the Authority provides—at the option of the evacuee owners—either storage in a Government warehouse located within the evacuated area or transportation at Government expense to a point of residence outside. In connection with real estate, commercial holdings, farm machinery, and other similar properties, the Authority acts more in the role of intermediary or agent. At the request of evacuee property-holders, it attempts to find potential buyers or tenants, arranges for the rental or sale of both commercial and agricultural holdings, checks inventories of stored personal goods, audits accounts rendered to evacuees, and performs a variety of similar services. Any person who is interested in buying or leasing the property of evacuees should communicate with the nearest Evacuee Property Office in the West Coast evacuated area. The locations of these offices are:

Whitcomb Hotel Building, San Francisco, Calif.

Room 955, 1031 South Broadway, Los Angeles, Calif.

Room 6609, White Building, Seattle, Wash.

Wherever possible, these offices will try to put potential buyers or tenants in touch with potential sellers or lessors among the evacuee population. It should be emphasized, however, that the WRA has no authority to requisition the property of evacuees and cannot force any resident of a relocation center to sell or lease against his will. Final agreement on terms is solely a matter between the parties directly involved.





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